

This is a basic question that would come up during a family budget discussion with a lot less zeros, much less the Government of the United States talking about trillions of dollars.

But before and beyond the unspent funds, what the Democrat package does spend money on is yet another partisan wish list with about 9 percent of it actually going to COVID. Meaning 91 percent of it is not even COVID-related.

Mr. Speaker, this bill's minimum wage increase, for instance, would kill 1.4 million blue-collar jobs, and its unemployment insurance hike would keep incentivizing workers to stay at home, which is a real struggle in my district when an employer wants 2,000 people to come back to work and they are competing with the Federal Government. This makes it worse.

Under this bill, Mr. Speaker, stimulus checks would go to illegal immigrants. Under this bill, taxpayer funding for abortion is allowed, and Planned Parenthood is eligible for PPP loans. Under this bill, funding is allowed to flow to colleges and universities that partner with companies that are controlled by Communist China. Under this bill, \$110 billion would be sent to schools, regardless if they reopen or not. There is no support for families who are desperate for educational options for their kids.

Obviously, of course, Democrats hid irrelevant spending in this bill, just like environmental justice grants, \$800 million in aid to other countries, and a \$112 million earmark for a big tech subway in Silicon Valley.

The bottom line, Mr. Speaker, is we are again debating a liberal wish list disguised as COVID relief. The American people aren't fooled by any of this. They see through the game, and they know that this town can and should do better.

COLOMBIA FAILS TO PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. MCGOVERN) for 5 minutes.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, over the past two decades, I have traveled to Colombia more than a dozen times. On each trip, I have had the privilege of meeting human rights defenders and social leaders.

In cities, towns, and remote rural areas, these brave men, women, and young people have confronted violence all their lives, and they and their communities are targeted by illegal armed groups—paramilitaries, guerrillas, and criminal organizations. They have been targets of the Colombian military and too often harassed and under illegal surveillance by the state. Simply for speaking on behalf of others, organizing to meet basic needs, or carrying out the duties of their profession—teacher, doctor, farmer, lawyer, journalist, and pastor—they are threatened, assaulted, and murdered.

During my last trip to Colombia, I spent a few days in the mountains of northern Cauca. I met with indigenous leaders defending their right to ancestral lands. I met with Afro-Colombian leaders creating small enterprises to support their families and their children. I met with demobilized FARC soldiers hoping to build a new life and future. I met with campesino farmers determined to stop growing coca and move into the legal economy.

We sat together, and we ate together. They shared their plans and they shared their dreams with me. They dream of a Colombia at peace and a Colombia that values all of its people, including those who have struggled to survive in Colombia's most violent rural areas.

Brave, generous, intelligent, creative, vulnerable, and humble, these leaders literally have bet their lives on the peace accord being fully implemented. They are counting on the peace accord to deliver the protection, economic development, truth, and justice it promised.

But the Colombian state has abandoned them, just as it has throughout all Colombia's history. The state has failed to put in place the individual and community-based protections demanded by the peace accord. The state has failed to dismantle the criminal networks and armed actors who daily threaten the lives of social leaders. The state has failed to identify and prosecute those who finance, profit by, and order the murders and violence aimed at human rights defenders and social leaders. Even worse, the Colombian state has chosen to remain absent from large parts of the country, failing to establish state presence, basic services, and leaving local leaders defenseless.

Since the peace accord was signed, over 500 rights defenders have been murdered, according to the United Nations human rights representative. Colombia's own ombudsman reports even higher numbers, documenting more than 700 murders during that same period, and nongovernmental organizations place the total even higher.

Rather than seeing this grim reality as a call to action, the government of President Ivan Duque has tried to obscure the number of murder victims. His government defends all the promises it has made on paper without changing by one iota the reality on the ground. It acts as if these murders and threats were some kind of public relations crisis, a battle over statistics and optics.

But it is not a PR problem. It is lives on the line. Economists have written books on the importance of human capital in the development of a prosperous economy. Lack of political will to prevent these murders and protect these local leaders is literally bleeding Colombia of the very human capital it needs to consolidate peace and create a more prosperous and dynamic future.

Two weeks ago, Human Rights Watch issued a report on the murders of Co-

lombia's social leaders and human rights defenders. It outlines practical actions and reforms the Colombian federal, state, and municipal governments could take to prevent, reduce, and even stop the murders and violence. Sadly, these recommendations were met with indifference, by hostility, or rejected out of hand. They were treated more like bad press than a serious attempt to offer help and provide a road map to interrupt the spiral of violence.

That is why I am calling on the Biden administration to make the protection of human rights defenders and social leaders one of America's highest priorities in its relationship with Colombia. The Biden administration and Congress should review the Human Rights Watch report and determine how U.S. policy and aid can advance the full implementation of the peace accord, support its protective and justice mechanisms, and help fulfill its promises of economic development in neglected areas.

I call upon my colleagues to stand up for peace, for human rights, and for an end to the violence against human rights defenders and social leaders in Colombia. These courageous social leaders deserve nothing less than America's full and unconditional support.

PROTECTING OUR MOST SACRED FREEDOMS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, government intervention often causes more harm than good. I have spent my time in Congress working to protect individual freedoms from unnecessary bureaucratic burdens.

I recognize that a strong family is vital to our Nation's progress and prosperity, which is why I have worked to advance legislation that allows families to flourish and protects life at all stages. It is unconscionable that in America, where we fight for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, we tolerate the systemic extermination of an entire generation. The right to life demands that we protect our Nation's most vulnerable, including the unborn.

Our First Amendment is a powerful instrument that has protected our most sacred freedoms for hundreds of years.

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Few other countries provide the same protections and freedoms that our First Amendment guarantees. We are the land of the free because of it. Our individual liberties are the envy of people around the world and they are the cornerstone of the world's oldest democracy.

Yet, today, these essential rights are under attack. H.R. 5 is the latest example of Democrats' misleading and partisan manner of legislating.

As a former educator and the Republican leader of the Education and Labor Committee, I can tell you that the bill may have equality in the title, but it certainly does not serve all Americans.

This legislation has a clever name and an allegedly noble purpose, but it is a vehicle for serious harmful consequences.

The Equality Act would empower the government to interfere in how regular Americans think, speak, and act. Specifically, it would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to make sexual orientation and gender identity protected classes. According to the National Review, this extreme legislation “redefines sex to include gender identity, undermines religious freedom, gives males who identify as females the right to women’s spaces, and sets a dangerous political precedent for the medicalization of gender-confused youth.”

Under H.R. 5, our Nation’s K–12 schools would be forced to treat gender as being fluid, subjective, and not tied to biological reality. The bill would undermine Title IX protections for girls by outlawing sex-based athletic competitions.

Even more troubling is the bill’s meticulous and intentional destruction of religious freedom protections.

Religiously-affiliated colleges and universities that maintain student codes of conduct, hiring practices, or housing rules reflecting sincerely held beliefs about marriage and sexuality, risk losing Federal funding under the Equality Act, as such policies would be deemed discriminatory.

Beloved secular private colleges that maintain single-sex policies, like Smith College and Morehouse College, would be forced to change their policies or forego Federal funding.

In the State of Virginia, we have already seen the displeasure among parents regarding such policy implementation. In an opinion piece published by the Washington Post in 2019, a former middle and high school teacher whose children attend Arlington public schools said: “It would erode parents’ rights over their children’s education, corrode Title IX protections for girls, and risk convincing healthy, normally developing boys and girls that their bodies are wrong and must be altered with hormones and be vandalized by surgical instruments.”

The bill also lacks any pro-life protections, which is why I am submitting my amendment that will protect religiously affiliated groups and individuals from being forced to perform abortions.

This bill is a brazen attempt to replace longstanding constitutional rights with the identity politics of the moment.

We have entered treacherous waters by considering legislation that stifles proven, bipartisan solutions and, more seriously, our Bill of Rights. It is outrageous that Democrats would adver-

tise these proposals as guaranteeing fundamental civil and legal rights.

Mr. Speaker, as elected Representatives, we all strive for equality before the law, but H.R. 5 is another classic example of Democrats passing a law now and figuring out what it means later. This is no way to legislate.

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. MCGOVERN). The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. COSTA) for 5 minutes.

Mr. COSTA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak on behalf of the American Rescue Plan.

The critical need to provide economic relief for struggling Americans and communities across the Nation could never be more evident than it is now. A year into this pandemic, the world is reeling from the fallout of the coronavirus pandemic.

This time last year, we had a handful of people that had, sadly, passed away from COVID-19 as it slowly made its way across the country. This week, we mourned over 500,000 lives lost and countless family members and loved ones that will be impacted forever, and we are still not out of the woods. Yesterday evening, we appropriately honored and recognized those Americans who lost their lives.

This pandemic has created a deep economic crisis for American families and small businesses. Economic inequities continue to accelerate, sadly. Our communities are hurting. They are hurting, and the time for decisive action is now, just as we did in a bipartisan effort last year.

Think about it. America—America, the richest country in the world, and yet the numbers are staggering. Over 18 million Americans are receiving unemployment benefits. Nearly 24 million Americans are going hungry, including 12 million children—12 million children. And nearly 40 million Americans cannot afford to pay the rent and possibly face eviction.

We must get more funding to our States and local governments so they can help those immediately impacted. This will allow us to begin to open our schools safely, which we must do, in addition to the rest of our economy. This is a key component of President Biden’s American Rescue Plan, which I support.

Now, let me repeat. The American Rescue Plan will work to keep communities safe and reopen schools with a robust vaccine plan for the public and educators that has been absent until the last 6 weeks.

In my own circumstance, my own constituency, the city of Fresno, in the heart of my district is facing a multi-million dollar budget shortfall. Like most cities across the country, they will be forced to cut jobs, including those of first responders, without Federal support. The same is true in the communities of Madera and Merced, also in my district.

The American Rescue Plan will bring nearly \$200 million to these two local communities combined, providing critical relief needed to provide funding for services their residents require, my constituents.

Now that vaccines are being administered, with millions inoculated so far, we have to continue to build on that momentum, for gaining the upper hand over this disease is on the horizon if we stay the course and implement the plan the President has outlined.

But we must do more to help Americans than just providing vaccinations. Obviously, that is at the front lines, and we will produce more vaccines in the next month and in the next 2 months so that, as the President said, 300 million Americans, by this summer, will have the ability to be vaccinated. But economic relief is part of the necessity to help them, and the American Rescue Plan does that.

Now, I have heard some of my colleagues on the other side talk about the concerns about the fiscal impacts to our economy. I am a Blue Dog. I believe that we need to have fiscal discipline, and I believe, after being here 17 years, that happens when Democrats are willing to deal with expenditures and Republicans are willing to deal with revenues. And unless we do deal with those two things together it isn’t going to happen.

The last administration indebted this Nation over \$7.5 trillion—\$7.5 trillion in the last 4 years. I didn’t hear much discussion during that time about the fiscal deficit. But I learned another thing in 17 years here; when Democrats are in charge, the debt matters. But when Republicans are in charge, who cares?

So let’s get real about this deficit. America is hurting today, and it needs our support and it needs our help.

Over 140 executives of major American corporations are supporting this plan. Over 140 of the major companies in America think that this is necessary, the \$1.9 trillion, to get this economy going and to put our country back on a track that we can be safe from this pandemic.

So I urge my colleagues to do the right thing and to vote in favor of the American Rescue Plan, as we did previous measures on a bipartisan effort.

CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize February as Career and Technical Education Month. Each year, this month highlights the benefits of a skills-based education and the valuable contributions that CTE students make to the American workforce.

A one-size-fits-all approach to education is not an effective way to prepare students for the workforce. We are